

the determined sub group is, for example, shifted clockwise to connect to the largest sub group. Persons located between the largest sub group and the sub group closest thereto are shifted by the number of members belonging to the sub group closest to the largest sub group in the direction opposite that in which the sub group closest to the largest sub group is shifted.

Details of the connection process have been described.

Since the number of sub groups in the largest divided group is reduced by one by the above-described connection process, the largest divided group is collectively arranged by the repetition of the process shown in the flowchart of Fig. 26.

When the process for one divided group is finished, the same process can be applied to the next largest group by the repetition of the process shown in the flowchart. Therefore, each of all groups is collectively arranged by the repetitions of the process shown in the flowchart, and the seating-order determination processing is finished with the target condition being obtained.

Two example seating-order changes in the seating-order determination processing will be described below.

Fig. 27 shows a first example. In a state shown in Fig. 27(a), only a group G1 indicated by black circles is divided into sub groups SG1 and SG2. The sub group SG2 closest to

00972301-100504

the largest sub group SG1 is located in the counterclockwise direction.

In this case, the connection process performs shifting indicated by arrows in Fig. 27(a) to change a seating order to that shown in Fig. 27(b), and the seating-order determination processing is completed.

Fig. 28 shows a second example. In a state shown in Fig. 28(a), two groups, a group G1 indicated by black circles and a group G2 indicated by white circles, are divided. The largest divided group is the group G1. The group G1 is divided into three sub groups SG1, SG2, and SG3. The sub groups SG2 and SG3 are located at the same distance from the largest sub group SG1 clockwise and counterclockwise. In this case, according to the above-described rule, shifting is performed first so as to connect the sub group SG3, located in the counterclockwise direction from the largest sub group.

Then, as shown in Fig. 28(b), two sub groups SG11 and SG2 are disposed. The sub group closest to the largest sub group SG11 is SG2, and located in the clockwise direction from the largest sub group SG11.

The connection process is applied to the sub group SG2 to obtain a state shown in Fig. 28(c), in which the group G1 is collectively arranged.

As a result of the process, another divided group G2 is

collectively arranged. A total to two repetitions of the connection process completes the seating-order determination processing.

When the seating-order determination processing is completed as described above, for example, the seating-order determiner 71 generates seating-order information showing the determined seating order and sends it to each teleconference device TCD. Together with the seating-order information, the seating-order determiner 71 sends group information indicating the state of grouping.

In the above-described case, the seating-order determiner 71 determines the seating order according to the result of group determination such that conference participants belonging to the same groups are collectively arranged. To make a viewing range small when watching members belonging to the same group, members belonging to the same groups may be arranged so as to be uniformly dispersed.

As shown in Fig. 29, for example, a seating order may be determined such that conference participants belonging to groups G1 and G2 are uniformly dispersed.

6. Seating-order changing processing performed according to seating-order information in a teleconference device

0072384-10001  
TOP SECRET